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Official Records

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New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 10 and 110 (*continued*)

Report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/62/137)

Report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/62/138)

Mr. Chávez (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru has followed with great interest the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Support Office. These bodies make up a new structure within the United Nations.

Like other members of the international community, Peru attaches great importance to the effective work of the new intergovernmental advisory body, namely the Peacebuilding Commission. We would like thus to congratulate Ambassador Ismael Gaspar Martins of Angola for spearheading the initial work of the Organizational Committee and of the Commission as a whole during the launch phase. He has shown great tact and care in achieving that. We wish the fullest success to the Permanent Representative of Japan as Chair of the Commission during his term.

The Commission fills a vacuum within the Organization, allowing countries that have experienced situations of conflict to build a period of stability and sustainable peace. The Peacebuilding Commission is much more than just a coordination body. Its real importance lies in its objective of adopting integrated peacebuilding strategies that coordinate the efforts of national, regional and international actors. These integrated strategies should be monitored on the ground using quantitative and qualitative indicators, with active participation, since they are primarily responsible for these activities, of the authorities and society of the country included on the agenda. Thus, as the Commission has seen during its first year of work, appreciation of the priorities of the beneficiary country itself is of major importance.

The absence of a culture of peace, the prevalence of violence and arbitrariness in the exercise of power, exclusion of the most vulnerable and of minorities and, in general, the tendency to be motivated only by the instinct for survival are characteristics that become permanent and structural in the context of prolonged conflict. To counter that situation, it is necessary to rebuild the social fabric and generate new democratic values of tolerance and participation, reaffirming in the minds of the people the notion that security and quality of life can be truly rooted only in peace.

The various spheres of peacebuilding make up an interrelated, multidimensional whole that must be dealt with care in each individual case. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, national reconciliation, reform of the justice and security sectors, improvement of public management and proper use of natural resources, inter alia, must be tackled as soon as the phase of overcoming violence has been achieved, even while peacekeeping operations

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are in place and when an appropriate level of stabilization has been reached.

After having moved forward in the area of regulations, procedures and methodologies of peacebuilding with reference to countries on its agenda and having taken important steps towards the adoption of provisional guidelines for the participation of civil society, the Commission must constantly strive to improve coordination within the United Nations and other bodies within the system, as befits a constructive and cooperative relationship. Indeed, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have, within their mandates, specific roles in terms of peacebuilding. The very valid example of this constant link has been the case of Burundi, where the Security Council has received recommendations and early warning of a very specific nature. We feel that it is necessary to continue to work along these lines.

The delegation of Peru is following with interest the cases of Sierra Leone and Burundi, which are currently on the Commission's agenda. We sincerely hope that these endeavours will be successful, because this is a very important objective that will serve as a valuable precedent when considering the incorporation of other countries. In this regard, we welcome the endeavours of the representatives of the Netherlands and Norway, chairmen of the respective country-specific configurations for Sierra Leone and Burundi, and also the commitment of the Governments of Burundi and Sierra Leone to peacebuilding in their respective countries.

A key task of the Commission is to identify the critical problems relating to peacebuilding, which are linked, in a general manner, to the deep-rooted causes of respective conflicts. Failure to address these problems could lead to a resurgence of violence and to disintegration. As a result of its first months of work and the valuable information emanating from missions in the field, the Commission drew up a strategic framework for Burundi. Advances in identifying critical areas with a view to drafting an integrated strategy are also important in the case of Sierra Leone, which has just successfully held its presidential and parliamentary elections. Next comes the period of shaping the final integrated peacebuilding strategy and, what is perhaps more difficult, the strengthening of the Commission's impact on the ground. That is essential and requires not only long-term action, but also short-term projects with a tangible, rapid effect that will generate confidence in the population.

The endeavours of the Commission call for the support of actors outside the United Nations. Here we should draw attention to the active participation of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It is also important to persuade private enterprise, both national and transnational, of the need to participate in international endeavours to rebuild countries, enhancing the potential that the reconstruction process signifies for them.

Peru also welcomes the initiatives intended to promote and appropriately disseminate the work of the Commission, promoting greater participation of civil society organizations and greater impact of their work on the ground.

There can be no lasting peace, if it does not go hand in hand, from an early stage, with democracy, social inclusion, soundness of institutions and a sustainable economy. Security, development and human rights are closely interlinked. In short, this is the spirit with which my country works in its commitment to strengthening through constructive initiatives the new peacebuilding architecture of the United Nations.

In this belief, Peru, committed unfailingly to strengthening multilateralism and peacekeeping, is a candidate to become a member of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission for the period 2009-2011. We undertake to continue to contribute within the Commission to the achievement of these lofty ideals.

Ms. Graham (New Zealand): New Zealand strongly supports the role of the Peacebuilding Commission in coordinating and integrating post-conflict peacebuilding activities. The Commission has always been an integral component of the wider United Nations reform agenda. Following its establishment, we are hopeful that a more comprehensive response to post-conflict situations will be possible, resulting in lasting peace.

In the two years since world leaders agreed to establish the Peacebuilding Commission, solid progress has been made in getting this new body up and running and on building the support architecture — the Fund and the Support Office. We are pleased to note that

operations in Burundi and Sierra Leone are already well underway, following the referrals of those two countries to the Commission in 2006. But the Commission remains in its infancy. Only once the outcomes of initial projects begin to be evident will it be possible to draw some conclusions about the efficacy of the Commission's work.

Looking ahead, we recognize that the key to the body's long-term success is its ability to achieve demonstrable results in its actual operations. In that respect, New Zealand is particularly interested in the interaction between the Peacebuilding Commission's activities and those of the United Nations and other agencies working in the field.

Building capacity in post-conflict situations is not an activity the United Nations can achieve alone. The engagement of local authorities, as well as the involvement of civil society elements, both in country and in New York, in the Commission's activities, will be critical to its success. Even more important will be ensuring coordination and coherence with other aid agencies and international organizations on the ground. Greater information exchange between partners in the field, donors and Commission members will continue to be integral in building the continued confidence and support of the wider United Nations membership. In addition, New Zealand hopes that the rolling out of the "one United Nations" initiative, as part of efforts to improve system-wide coherence of the United Nations at the country level, will further enhance the operations of the body.

This year holds particular challenges for the Peacebuilding Commission, and we welcome the appointment of Japan as the new Chair. Japan will play a key role in shaping the future direction and focus of this body. As the year progresses, a key challenge facing the Commission will be to ensure that it has clarity of purpose and a good understanding of the environment on the ground before taking on new countries. New Zealand would be wary of moving on to new countries without a clear understanding of the lessons learned from the first phases of the Burundi and Sierra Leone operations.

New Zealand continues to support United Nations efforts in assisting young and fragile States achieving peace and prosperity. Like the United Nations, New Zealand has a long history of involvement in the State-building process in Timor-Leste and is committed to its success. As last year's events demonstrated, however, the road to stability and development is not going to be quick or short of challenges. We hope the commitment of the United Nations will be sustained over the long term. There may eventually be a supporting role for the Peacebuilding Commission, provided such assistance is considered appropriate.

As said earlier, a further challenge for the Commission will be to strive to deliver concrete results in its first two countries. In order to meet the expectations of the membership, comprehensive efforts and partnerships will be required in the transition from war to peace. New Zealand will continue to follow the Commission's progress in this regard.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): Over the past year, the Peacebuilding Commission has achieved important results. The task before us one year ago was certainly not an easy one: setting up a whole new body, with its own rules, procedures and functions, in an area of critical relevance to post-conflict countries.

This is why I would like, first and foremost, to commend the Angolan Presidency, in the person of Ambassador Gaspar Martins and his team, for their excellent work in leading the Commission through the initial stages, when its very foundations were being built.

Brazil is certain that the Japanese Presidency will guide the Commission to even more ambitious achievements. Let me again say how pleased we are to see Ambassador Takasu at the helm of this important body and, once more, pledge our full support to him in the discharge of his responsibilities.

The reports on the Peacebuilding Commission and on the Peacebuilding Fund provide an accurate account of the main activities of the Commission, as well as of the most important issues that need to be tackled from now onwards.

Brazil acknowledges the progress made in setting up the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. Under the Dutch coordination, we have been engaged in defining the basic parameters that will steer our involvement with Sierra Leone. Under the coordination of Norway, we have agreed on an integrated peacebuilding strategy, which has proven to be a useful guide in the path towards consolidating peace in Burundi.

Yet much remains to be done. The Commission must consolidate its identity as an important body in the United Nations family, with its own niche and mandate. It will need to prove its added value as an instrument capable of mobilizing resources and galvanizing relevant partners into action. The Commission must not run the risk of being seen merely as another body in an already crowded aid architecture — nor must it be seen as an institution devoted to conceptual discussions that may never come to fruition. Particular attention should be given, in this context, to the need to strengthen coordination with other United Nations bodies and the Bretton Woods institutions. Success will be measured by the Commission's ability to bring about concrete benefits to the countries under its consideration.

Therefore, when it comes to conceiving a monitoring and tracking mechanism for the Commission's strategies, one must be very cautious not to place additional burden — either financial or bureaucratic — on benefiting countries. Such monitoring mechanisms should also focus on the commitments made by donors and partners, in order to assure that our joint efforts will actually be translated into tangible outcomes.

Brazil supports the issuance of periodic statements and recommendations in specific circumstances — as we did in the case of Sierra Leone's elections and in the face of recent developments in Burundi. The Peacebuilding Commission should have the flexibility to react, in various forms, as events unfold in countries on its agenda. By doing so, the Commission actually operates as a useful early warning system to ward off any deterioration in the security or political situation on the ground.

Let me also take this opportunity to commend the performance of the Peacebuilding Fund over the past months. The projects already approved for Burundi and Sierra Leone can serve as a means of leveraging further investments in areas of crucial importance for the peacebuilding process. Brazil also welcomes the establishment of an emergency window facility, which endows the Commission with the necessary agility to respond in urgent situations.

We welcome the recent announcement by the Secretary-General that Liberia will also be eligible for the Peacebuilding Fund. We hope that resources for other countries that are currently not on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission, such as Haiti, could be made available as soon as possible.

While bearing in mind the clear distinction between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, it is important to consider innovative ideas to enhance dialogue between them. Members should become more familiar with the projects being financed by the Peacebuilding Fund, in line with the priorities set forth by the integrated peacebuilding strategies and the priorities defined by Governments in benefiting countries.

Brazil supports the consideration of new countries by the Commission. It is our understanding that the Commission is ready to grow. It should be able to deal with other situations that require its attention and action. In order to do so, however, it is important that the working methods are rendered more expeditious and result-oriented. Needless to say, the Peacebuilding Support Office should be structured in a way that is compatible with such mounting demands. In particular, we strongly support the inclusion of Guinea-Bissau in the Commission's agenda. Its nascent political stability and its efforts towards economic reconstruction need the attention and the support of the international community. The Commission should stand by Guinea-Bissau and address the priorities identified by its own people and its own Government.

Peacebuilding is a rather complex undertaking, which gathers a wide array of actors both on the ground and abroad. The issue of coordination in developing recovery strategies therefore stands as a vital one. Brazil believes that the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council should pool their efforts to provide the Peacebuilding Commission with sufficient authority to properly discharge its functions.

Brazil also endorses the view that a successful approach to peacebuilding requires our focused and continuous attention on the strengthening of national institutions, the promotion of reconciliation, reform of the justice and security sectors and the advancement of human rights, among other crucially important activities. Those efforts, however, should be accompanied by actions to promote sustainable economic and social development.

Inspired by the International Labour Organization's well-known maxim, one could say that poverty

anywhere is a threat to peace and prosperity everywhere. Where poverty reigns, countries find it difficult to maintain stability. The Commission's work should therefore allow for the generation of wealth, employment and new opportunities — so that the countries on its agenda may be able to walk their own path towards peace and prosperity.

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union presidency, and I would like to make a few additional observations.

The creation of the Peacebuilding Commission was one of the most important results of the United Nations reform foreseen by 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/2). The first report on its work and activities (A/62/137) documents the important work accomplished during the first year of existence of the Peacebuilding Commission. The Czech Republic has the privilege to serve as a member of the Peacebuilding Commission since the beginning of this year and took an active part in the Peacebuilding Commission's work.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Ismael Gaspar Martins of Angola for his work as the first Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission. Under his guidance the Peacebuilding Commission has achieved many important results. My delegation is fully confident that his successor, Ambassador Yukio Takasu of Japan, will further develop this sound foundation.

My country has contributed to the Peacebuilding Fund, and we are happy that the first projects financed from the Fund are being implemented. In the future we would appreciate a more prompt reaction of the Fund to the situation on the ground and more efficient cooperation between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund based on the regular exchange of information.

Peacebuilding is a very broad process comprising the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the entire socio-economic basis. It includes urgent political tasks to restore the rule of law, including security-sector reform, to initiate economic reform, and also to develop the educational and health systems. The whole United Nations system, including United Nations programmes and United Nations specialized agencies like UNESCO, the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization and others must take an active part in those efforts. The United Nations system has to perform as one in the countries on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission. One of the most urgent tasks of the Peacebuilding Commission in the near future will be promoting cooperation within the United Nations system as a whole.

The Czech Republic regards security sector reform as a very important part of the peacebuilding process. It is not possible to start economic and social recovery without reforming the security sector and without creating stable conditions for developing a democratic society and the rule of law. Demobilization and the fight against illicit small arms and light weapons are crucial. The Czech Republic has recently provided a voluntary contribution of $100,000 for the regional workshop for African countries that will be organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in December this year in Addis Ababa. The workshop is part of a broad project aimed at capacity-building for the implementation of the international instrument on tracing illicit small arms and light weapons. The financial contribution of the Czech Republic is part of its long-term cooperation with the United Nations which will also continue in the future.

The Peacebuilding Commission during the first year of its existence devoted close attention to the two countries on its agenda: Burundi and Sierra Leone. We highly appreciate the immense work of the Chairs of the country-specific configurations, Ambassador Johan Løvald and Ambassador Frank Majoor.

Now is time to add other countries to the agenda. Guinea-Bissau, Timor-Leste and Haiti are countries mentioned in that connection. In deciding which countries should be put on the agenda, we shall take into consideration the real needs of the countries, their actual situation and the role that the Peacebuilding Commission can play in their peacebuilding efforts. Our decision should not be limited by the organizational capacities of the Peacebuilding Commission but has to be based on the real needs of the respective countries.

One year is too short a period to make a thorough and final evaluation. Our expectations for the work of the Peacebuilding Commission were very high, and not everything we hoped for was achieved during the first year. But we must be realistic. The Peacebuilding Commission has just started its work and was obliged to deal with such necessary organizational tasks as

defining its working methods, adopting rules of procedures and determining guidelines for participation of civil society. We hope that in the near future the Peacebuilding Commission will also find modalities to allow the full participation of entities such as the European Community in its meetings, thereby ensuring the full involvement of this biggest donor in the peacebuilding activities.

The Peacebuilding Commission is now in a much better position to concentrate its work on the real needs of the respective countries and their peoples. Therefore we look to the future with a lot of optimism. We are convinced that the Peacebuilding Commission will soon clearly demonstrate its whole potential, to the benefit of the people on the ground.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): Italy wishes to thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing this joint debate, which offers an opportunity to enhance the dialogue between Member States on the work and perspective of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund.

Italy aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union presidency and wishes to focus on several further issues that may help point the debate towards concrete steps to take.

Thanks to the efforts of the Chairs, first Angola and then Japan, we may now verify the concrete achievements of the Commission in this very first year of activity. Beginnings are never easy, but the Commission has succeeded in building up its own credibility by adopting rules and working methods, developing implementation strategies for countries on the agenda and involving all the stakeholders by bringing them together and working towards the same goals in order to avoid the wasting of resources and overlapping of programmes.

In this regard, we stress the importance of having included the European Community, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Organization of the Islamic Conference in the country-specific configurations, and we look forward now to a solution for the adequate representation of the European Union.

In the stabilization processes, the involvement of civil society is imperative. After the adoption of the guidelines for its participation in the Commission's work, we now expect an active policy that may enhance and smooth the relationship.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Netherlands and Norway in their capacity as Chairs and Coordinators of the country-specific configurations, which have promoted the work towards the adoption of the integrated peacebuilding strategies. We must now work to develop a monitoring and tracking mechanism for the mutual engagements and trends of the peacebuilding process, enhancing the participation of regional and subregional organizations.

By commending the efforts by El Salvador as Chair of the Working Group on Lessons Learned, we wish to underline the great potential this Group has in helping the Commission to better coordinate its work by fine-tuning the subjects addressed.

One year on, we are ready to move forward, building on what we have achieved and addressing new challenges in a creative and flexible way that may help in developing policies to fit different situations.

The Commission should now live up to the ambitions that inspired its creation and articulate a richer and varied agenda by looking at peace processes as a whole. We cannot establish peacekeeping missions without envisaging, from the beginning, peacebuilding strategies. What I mean is that the Commission should start reflecting on how to improve its approach towards the entire process by assuming a more proactive role, within a wider radar screen, so to say, in order to better assure the continuity of what is being done, and is intended to be done, by the international community in order to stabilize a country. In line with such an approach, the Commission might become a sort of permanent observatory for new countries that are on their way to exiting the immediate conflict phase, and working together with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department for Political Affairs, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the entire United Nations system in order to be ready, when requested, to address critical situations. This should be done instead of simply waiting until those situations are placed before the Commission, as is now the case, which results in a loss of time and, therefore, effectiveness and efficacy.

The entire process that has the Commission at its core should be conceived of as a relay race between all the actors involved. If we do not think in terms of integrated planning processes, we risk failing, wasting our efforts and reverting to conflict.

Finally, the Commission is more than a donor conference. If it is true that resources are dramatically needed, it is even more important to ensure the best use possible for those resources and to try to achieve predictable financing for medium- and long-term interventions.

The use of the Peacebuilding Fund may help fill some gaps. There must be complementarity with the Commission's strategic objectives, but we are aware that the two bodies are different instruments and one does not replace the other.

Mrs. Mladineo (Croatia): Allow me to start by saying that it has been an honour for my country to serve as a member of the Peacebuilding Commission at its first session. Right from the beginning, Croatia took a leading role, along with other friends of the initiative, in advocating the case for the establishment of the Commission as an effective and transparent body on which all Member States would have a chance to serve. We believed at that time, and we still believe now, that, prior to the establishment of the Commission, a vital tool was missing from the arsenal of the United Nations. Now, along with the Peacebuilding Fund and Peacebuilding Support Office, the Commission constitutes the indispensable peacebuilding architecture of the United Nations.

Croatia would like to stress that it aligns itself with the extensive and substantive statement of the European Union, but we also want to express some of our own views on the Commission's achievements in the past year.

Today, in the General Assembly, we have in front of us for the first time the report of the Commission and the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund. As a very active member of the Commission, we believe that the report reflects accurately the atmosphere of cooperation and achievements of the Commission's first year. We were of the view that the report should not be a mere factual record of our meetings, but rather a document recording our achievements and identifying the challenges that lie ahead of us.

The first year of work covered new ground in trying to bring more coherence and coordination to peacebuilding, especially through its impact on the ground for the two countries currently on its agenda, Burundi and Sierra Leone. It has not been easy, as we have been faced with both institutional and substantive challenges.

A number of things have been accomplished, though. The Commission established its rules and procedures, guidelines for the participation of civil society in its work and a variety of methods for the conduct of its work. But, above all, the Commission adopted the first United Nations peacebuilding document, the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi, and it is well on its way to finalizing the Sierra Leone compact.

It has succeeded in mobilizing all stakeholders in Burundi and Sierra Leone around the priorities that have been established for the peacebuilding process in both countries. This has been a major achievement, because national ownership with all partners and stakeholders involved is a key to successful peacebuilding and sustainable development.

However, much still remains to be done. The Commission needs to develop tracking and monitoring mechanisms to measure the implementation of integrated peacebuilding strategies. To accomplish this, a complete mapping of existing and planned activities of all partners should be carried out. For this to succeed, it is essential that all peacebuilding efforts be harmonized. During our one-year tenure, we have recognized the importance of field missions and we should consider ways of financing them. Keeping in mind our own experience, we supported the Working Group on Lessons Learned. It is another important forum, which gives Commission members a chance to share experiences. This practice should be continued and further developed in order to help countries on the Commission's agenda. We can also never stress enough that the coordination of other United Nations bodies and of Bretton Woods institutions and regional and subregional organizations with the Commission is of the utmost importance.

Let me now turn to the Peacebuilding Fund. Croatia was one of the Fund's co-founders and is honoured to have a member on its Advisory Board. We are very happy to see that the first disbursements have started and that the first successful meeting of the Advisory Board took place in September. We are of the view that contributions to the Fund should continue in a predictable way in order to reach the mark of $250 million in funding. Croatia will certainly continue contributing to the extent possible. We hope that

disbursement mechanisms will be improved so that the Fund can fulfil its role as a catalyst for emergency funding. However, long-term funding has to come from other sources.

It was only a year ago that the Peacebuilding Commission started its work. We strongly believe it has achieved much for a new United Nations body. It covers territory where many countries have different understandings of what the purpose of such a body should be. A lot of positive energy and understanding, however, has been invested in ensuring its good and productive start. We are among those who strongly believe in the results-oriented work of the Peacebuilding Commission, and we are among those that are painfully aware of how difficult that goal is. This is why our assessment of the first year of the Peacebuilding Commission's work is positive: because we believe that it has started in the right direction by making a real impact and a real difference on the ground.

Even though Croatia is no longer a member of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission, it has remained a member of the country-specific meeting on Burundi and will continue to share its experience and lessons learned in post-conflict recovery and will try to help make a real impact on the ground.

Let me conclude by saying that with the valuable experience of having been a member of the Peacebuilding Commission in its first year, we are ready to use that experience in other United Nations contexts, such as the Security Council, for a seat on which Croatia is running in the next week's election.

Mr. McNee (Canada): Canada is a strong supporter of the Peacebuilding Commission and believes it has a critical role to play in moving the international community beyond ad hoc peacebuilding efforts. Together, we need to move to more organized and coherent responses to address the needs of post-conflict situations in order to build lasting peace.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Gasper Martins of Angola, the outgoing Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission. We thank him for his dedicated work during the Commission's formative phase. We would also like to recognize the work and key role of the Peacebuilding Support Office, under the able leadership of Assistant Secretary-General McAskie. Much has been accomplished in the initial year of operations. As we look ahead, Canada welcomes Japan's chairmanship of the Peacebuilding Commission and looks forward to working with Japan to ensure continued progress.

Canada was very pleased to note that the country-specific meetings in October 2006 on Burundi and Sierra Leone identified key priorities for assistance by the Commission. Both countries were declared eligible for assistance from the Peacebuilding Fund. We are hopeful that the work that the Commission is doing to support the national peacebuilding strategies of Sierra Leone and Burundi will build expertise and develop analytical tools. In short, Canada believes that this work could identify and address, in an integrated manner, key thematic areas for these two post-conflict peacebuilding situations, as well as lessons learned to assist in future peacebuilding. The development of effective monitoring mechanisms will be vital to ensuring the success of these efforts.

We are now about to enter a new phase. Canada hopes that this will involve the extension of the Commission's agenda to other country situations, as well as to other thematic issues. Countries emerging from conflict need to know that there is a venue that can provide them with long-term support across a range of issues. Their interest in the Peacebuilding Commission will be a crucial determinant of its success.

We recognize that this will bring with it new pressures. Canada, therefore, supports an action-oriented, flexible mandate for the Commission, a mandate that can focus on realistic and achievable results. Thematic areas of work should include security sector and justice sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, gender equality issues, children and armed conflict and the implementation of durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons, particularly where they have been displaced for protracted periods.

We were very encouraged when, at the first country-specific meetings on Burundi and Sierra Leone, the Commission reaffirmed the centrality to its work of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security as well as of Council resolutions on children and armed conflict. The Working Group on Lessons Learned should be discussing these thematic issues so that they can be integrated into the work of the Commission.

(*spoke in French*)

Specifically with respect to the report before us today (A/62/137), we welcome the references to the need to strengthen the relevance of peacebuilding strategies as a tool to generate support for peacebuilding in the countries under Commission consideration. We very much support the call for the Commission to engage in further dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, donor countries and the broader United Nations system.

As the work of the Peacebuilding Commission evolves, it is necessary to take a hard look at its functions and mandates to maximize its effectiveness as an intergovernmental body. The Commission is an important component of the wider United Nations reform agenda, including proposed reforms to the international peace and security architecture. This includes efforts to enhance United Nations human rights capacity, to strengthen humanitarian action and to better protect civilian populations. The transition from war to lasting peace requires comprehensive, concerted efforts to prevent a return to conflict and displacement.

We look forward to working with the Peacebuilding Commission in the coming months and years as it works to clarify its role and make a useful contribution to the very important task of building peace in countries emerging from conflict situations.

Mr. Antonio (Angola) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of Ambassador Gaspar Martins, who would have liked to be here at this historic moment were it not for circumstances beyond his control, and on behalf of the Angolan delegation, I would like, at the outset, to say how pleased we are to see you, Sir, presiding over our work. We assure you of the full cooperation of the Angolan delegation.

I would also like to congratulate Ambassador Takasu of Japan on his presentation of the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/62/137), which faithfully reflects the outcome of the tireless work by the Commission in its two country-specific configurations during the first year of an experience, difficult at times, but also interesting. It was interesting because it enabled the Organization to acquire a new structure which, if we give it the means it needs and continue to give it the same attention, will clearly make a difference in the quest for solutions to the challenges raised by post-conflict situations.

The report (A/62/138) before us today on that important instrument, the Peacebuilding Fund, also deserves our attention. We welcome the impact that the Fund is beginning to have in the field. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the caucus of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Peacebuilding Commission.

It will be recalled that, in February this year, Ambassador Ismael Gaspar Martins had the distinct honour to address the Assembly, as Chairman of the Commission, to stress the capital importance of the Peacebuilding Commission, which is a cornerstone of the new United Nations peacebuilding architecture and an important outcome of the reform of our Organization.

During their first year of activities, the three pillars of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture — the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund — were all in a development phase. In particular, that phase was characterized by efforts to establish structures and to introduce innovative working methods, as well as channels for interaction with countries on the agenda, other United Nations bodies, various United Nations departments, donors, non-governmental organizations and the media.

Angola is very honoured to have been Chair of the Commission during that critical phase and to have made its humble contribution to the founding ideas that guided the Commission during that initial stage, thanks to the support of Member States, particularly those belonging to the Commission — the delegations of Norway, El Salvador and the Netherlands — and the support of the Peacebuilding Support Office. We are particularly moved by the very kind words that several delegations have been good enough to say in that regard, particularly about Ambassador Ismael Gaspar Martins, the former Chairman.

The first report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/62/137) attests clearly to the progress made and remaining challenges to be overcome. Indeed, the report is innovative, in addition to being very frank regarding the considerable efforts still necessary to address the challenges to be faced by the Commission. The United Nations peacebuilding architecture has the potential to emerge as an important tool for the

international community in its efforts to prevent countries from relapsing into cycles of conflict.

During the second phase of activities, it is planned that the role and the functions of the various components of the peacebuilding architecture will develop further. It is anticipated that a dynamic and mutually reinforcing relationship among the three pillars of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, as well as between them and other bodies working on the ground, will be fine-tuned.

This debate thus offers all Member States a unique opportunity to contribute to the improvement of the working methods of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, given the interest that we have all had in its establishment within the framework of the reform that we have long sought. Therefore, we must take this opportunity to benefit from the viewpoints and input of all those who can contribute to peacebuilding, particularly countries that have successfully managed post-conflict situations and that have the knowledge and experience necessary for similar situations.

In the view of my delegation, the following elements could be crucial for the future of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund.

First, we must continue to consider national ownership as an important principle for peacebuilding in countries on the Commission's agenda, particularly Burundi and Sierra Leone.

Second, the Commission will have to continue to operate within a flexible, transparent and inclusive framework that promotes the development of partnerships with national, regional and international actors.

Third, the importance of the unique composition of the Peacebuilding Commission will be judged on the basis of the commitment of its members to the cause of peacebuilding and of their contributions to the Commission's activities.

Fourth, while it is essential that the Commission continue to pay particular attention to formulating advice related to peacebuilding in Burundi and Sierra Leone, it needs to consider how it will be able to meet requests from other countries emerging from conflict, through mechanisms established under the Commission's founding resolutions.

Fifth, a year of activities has permitted the Commission to accumulate experience enabling it to begin to think about its working methods and, as a result, about improvements to be made to its provisional rules of procedure.

Sixth, in the context of improving the relationship among the components of the peacebuilding architecture, it is important to redefine the relationship between the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Commission.

Seventh, providing the Peacebuilding Support Office with the financial resources necessary for its functioning must be a concern for all Member States.

Eighth, the flexibility demonstrated in the disbursement of the Peacebuilding Fund's funds for emergency situations — funds that have enabled us to finance a number of activities in Côte d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic — must be encouraged. That flexibility should also serve as an example for narrowing the gap between the Fund's decision-making and its disbursements to the countries concerned.

Ninth, Member States' contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund are proving to be crucial, including for continued flexibility in disbursement for emergency situations.

In conclusion, I should particularly like to wish every success to the Japanese Chair, to the team in the Peacebuilding Support Office and to the delegations of El Salvador, Norway, Ghana and the Netherlands in carrying out their tasks for the Commission. In particular, we assure them of the cooperation of the Angolan delegation. We have fond memories of the Peacebuilding Support Office, with which we had the very great pleasure to share unforgettable moments at the inception of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): Austria welcomes this opportunity to discuss the reports of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund a little more than a year after those organs became operational. The General Assembly can now reflect on the experiences of the past year and on the lessons learned in the work of the Commission.

Austria fully aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. I will therefore focus on only two points.

First, Austria attaches special importance to the systematic integration of a gender perspective into all aspects of the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. We believe that gender-specific responses to the challenges of peacebuilding, as well as the systematic participation of women in all aspects of peacebuilding processes, are essential prerequisites for the success and long-term sustainability of peacebuilding efforts. We are heartened by the experience of the past year, which shows that, both within the Peacebuilding Support Office and within the Peacebuilding Commission, there is a high degree of awareness of the need to accord special attention to issues of gender.

Gender mainstreaming, as well as the rights and needs of women and girls, figure in both the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi and the draft framework for cooperation in Sierra Leone. In practice, however, it often seems to be difficult to translate the general recognition of the importance of gender into concrete measures and to commit to their implementation. All stakeholders need to make more efforts not to fall into the post-conflict trap of focusing almost exclusively on the so-called angry young men, while neglecting the needs and rights of women.

Austria believes that in its second year the Peacebuilding Commission needs to do more to ensure that the general commitment to gender mainstreaming is adequately reflected in all documents and strategies emanating from the joint endeavours of all stakeholders.

Secondly, Austria appreciates the establishment of the Peacebuilding Fund as an important complement to the Commission. We believe it can be a very useful tool through its creative approach aimed at filling gaps in immediate post-conflict situations that are not adequately addressed by other mechanisms. We believe that allocations of resources from the Fund need to focus on this core role. Being convinced of the innovative nature the Fund represents and of its usefulness, Austria decided to contribute substantially to the Fund. I am happy to report that Austria is one of the few countries that have already contributed twice to the Peacebuilding Fund, in both 2006 and 2007.

For Austria, contributing to the Fund was a departure from the established mechanisms of development assistance. We are glad to see that Sierra Leone and Burundi were accorded $35 million each. We also attach great importance to the allocation of resources to countries that are not on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission, in accordance with the terms of reference of the Fund. Since the Peacebuilding Fund is institutionally independent of the Commission, allocations from the Fund are not linked to the inscription of a country on the agenda of the Commission. The allocation of financial resources to dialogue processes in Côte d'Ivoire and in the Central African Republic is an important step in this context. Austria hopes to see similar contributions in similar situations in the near future.

Ms. Lisson (Australia): Australia continues to be a strong supporter of the Peacebuilding Commission. We were a key advocate for the establishment of the Commission during the 2005 United Nations World Summit, and we consider the Commission as a key outcome of that Summit. Australia was also one of the first donors to the Peacebuilding Fund.

The Peacebuilding Commission has a critical role to play in post-conflict countries, supporting and coordinating the peacebuilding work of the United Nations and the broader international community in support of countries' own efforts. The Commission is charged with ensuring that our combined efforts are both strategic and coherent. It is designed to fill a critical gap in the architecture of the United Nations.

Establishing the Peacebuilding Commission took time, and understandably, a considerable amount of its activities in the first year were focused on administrative matters. We welcome the adoption of provisional rules of procedure and are pleased that preliminary guidelines for the involvement of civil society have been settled. We are also pleased that arrangements are now in place for the participation of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other institutional donors.

While such a focus on administrative matters was necessary, we hope this more formative period is now behind us. The focus of the Peacebuilding Commission must now be more fully on how it can best play its role of supporting countries emerging from conflict to lay the foundation for sustainable development.

Australia welcomes the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/62/137) and the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/62/138).

In relation to the Peacebuilding Commission, it is positive that the report outlines lessons learned, many of which are focused on how to maximize country ownership and involvement in the post-conflict recovery process. We fully support this focus and welcome the establishment by the Commission of a working group on lessons learned to accumulate best practices and lessons learned on critical peacebuilding issues.

In relation to the Peacebuilding Fund, we are grateful for the analysis not just of the Fund's operation, but also of how it can be improved to ensure efficient, quick and accountable disbursement of funds for peacebuilding activities, in line with the guidelines established for the Fund.

The Secretary-General recognizes there is further work to be done on strengthening the relevance of integrated peacebuilding strategies and coordination with all relevant actors, including those outside of the United Nations system. We consider both to be important and support the Secretary-General in these endeavours.

The relationship between the Commission and other intergovernmental bodies, especially the Security Council, is critical. Good working relationships between all relevant bodies and close collaboration at times will be essential to the success of the Commission. Important also is the role of the Peacebuilding Support Office and the cooperation of all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in peacebuilding efforts. We urge continued strengthening of coordination of this level also.

Australia considers that a further critical issue for the Peacebuilding Commission is for it to be very clear on the specific value it can add to each country on its agenda. The Commission needs to recognize that its role will be different depending on the specific country needs and the mechanisms, plans and strategies already in place. The Commission must be nimble and responsive to the challenges and needs of each country it considers. An analysis, even after such a relatively short period of operation, of how the Commission is contributing to peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone and Burundi would be useful, especially as the Commission begins to consider where it might next focus its attention.

Our hopes and expectations for what the Peacebuilding Commission can deliver are high, as they have been from its conception. We recognize that it is still early days of its operation and that it takes time for any new body to learn and apply lessons and to refine its processes and strategies. However, given the need for the Commission's support, the Commission must learn and improve as quickly as possible to ensure that it is delivering maximum results. Australia stands ready to work with the Commission and other Member States to realize this objective.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to begin by thanking the President for convening this important debate. Secondly, we would like to congratulate Ambassador Gaspar Martins of Angola for his important work in heading the Peacebuilding Commission during its first year of operation. Also, we would like to wish Ambassador Yukio Takasu, the Commission's current Chairperson, every success and assure him of our collaboration.

Chile welcomes this first report by the Peacebuilding Commission (A/62/137), which reflects not only the activities carried out, but also acknowledges the main obstacles and challenges that remain.

The Commission has successfully emerged from its first year of operation. Of course, there are pending matters, in particular the establishment of a useful and efficient mechanism to track and monitor the framework agreements reached by the Commission with the countries under its consideration.

The principles of national capacity and the priorities identified by the countries themselves continue to be the cornerstones of the Commission's activities on the ground. That allows the Commission's work to become yet another element of the development and recovery policies that national authorities have identified for post-conflict recovery.

Furthermore, the Commission's central role as catalyst for the main stakeholders and the resources made available to countries for their post-conflict strategies continue to be of key importance. The Commission's coordination with the international financial institutions is, we feel, of prime importance, and we support the idea put forth by its Chairman to establish a direct and dynamic link with those bodies.

The report on the Peacebuilding Fund reveals that we have yet to meet the target of $250 million established for its founding. My delegation trusts in the generosity of all, particularly of the developed countries, to reach that sum as soon as possible. The Fund report also draws attention to how that body has been able to take advantage of existing organic structures of the United Nations systems. Indeed, the delegation of responsibility for the fiduciary management of the Fund to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office clearly demonstrated how to maximize the benefits of the Organization's current structure without the need to create new mechanisms.

My delegation welcomes the recommendation made in the report relating to the Fund's participation in two post-conflict phases — the first devoted to societies that have recently emerged from conflict and are taking critical and urgent peacebuilding measures, and the second devoted to funding projects pursuant to the strategic frameworks agreed between the Commission and the country under consideration. We can thereby avoid the occasional emergence of frustration over the slow pace of discussions and negotiations between the Commission and the country under consideration.

On the subject of the Peacebuilding Fund, we feel it important to note that prior coordination is required between the Secretary-General and the Commission when the former wishes to declare a country eligible for access to the Fund's resources. Given that this faculty is established in the Fund's terms of reference, we feel it desirable to ensure due coordination between the Organizational Committee and the Commission in order to ensure that other countries are not encouraged to apply directly to the Secretary-General for funds without placing themselves under the Commission's consideration. We recall that the Commission's role transcends the mere delivery of resources; its multifaceted role and its presence on the ground should be encouraged.

Finally, I take this opportunity to express gratitude for the important support work of the Peacebuilding Support Office, without whose cooperation the Commission would be unable to resolve its own organizational problems, and to welcome the establishment of that new United Nations body.

Mr. Staur (Denmark): I thank the President of the General Assembly for providing this opportunity to discuss one of the major achievements of the United Nations reform process — the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission.

I would first of all like to align myself with the statement made by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. Let me also begin by thanking the Chairmen of the Organizational Committee and the country-specific configurations for their valuable work and for the progress achieved under their leadership.

The creation of the Peacebuilding Commission marked an important milestone for the United Nations. The need to address the difficult process from peace consolidation, humanitarian assistance and early recovery in post-conflict situations, through reconstruction to development, is obvious and difficult. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions for those complicated post-conflict situations.

Building peace is all about building bridges between actors within and outside the country or region in question. At the same time, building peace requires a clear assessment of short-, medium- and long-term needs and a clear commitment from the international community to do its utmost to meet those needs. In other words, the environment in which we have created the Peacebuilding Commission and the mandate we have entrusted it with are indeed complex and difficult, in terms of both the number of different actors involved and the complexities of the issues at hand. The challenges that the Commission is now facing are the same that we have been dealing with for decades, and it is fair to say not without some failures and shortcomings.

Those challenges are close to what we could call the core business of the United Nations itself and a field of challenges that could be considered one of the most strategically important to the United Nations system. In the eyes of the public, building peace and preventing the re-emergence of conflict and war are among the most important yardsticks for measuring the relevance and effectiveness of the United Nations.

Against that background, it is no wonder that we have all had great expectations as to what the Peacebuilding Commission can and should do. Little more than a year into the life of the Commission, we must, however be realistic in trying to evaluate its

work so far. There is a limit to what can realistically be achieved over a short time span. On the other hand, it is important that we address what some consider the shortfalls or challenges of the Peacebuilding Commission, and I would like to highlight a number of those challenges in this statement.

It is an important achievement that the Peacebuilding Commission succeeded in developing and defining the concept of integrated peacebuilding strategies. That has enabled the Commission to draw up the specific Strategic Framework for Burundi as well as the Sierra Leone draft integrated peacebuilding strategy framework for cooperation. The Commission has carried out important field visits and helped set an agenda for peacebuilding, and it has brought stakeholders together locally and internationally.

After a year in which much focus has been on the internal questions and working methods of the Commission, we now need to focus on outward-looking activities and actual progress on the ground. The innovative modalities of the Peacebuilding Commission and its focus at the country level should help it to become a forum inspiring concerted action, rather than being a talking shop with limited influence on the situation on the ground. Hopefully, the agenda of the Organizational Committee will be shorter in the year to come. Emphasis on and support for pragmatic and flexible working methods are crucial.

The capacity, experience and sense of ownership of many non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors are resources that the Commission should draw upon. Likewise, it should draw upon the unique resources of various African institutions and organizations, especially at the field level. National ownership of and regional support for peacebuilding processes are crucial; there is therefore a need for increased activity of the Commission in the field, as opposed to in New York. One of the Commission's unique features is precisely the possibility of bringing together all partners on the ground, including those that disagree and those of civil society.

The PBC would benefit from discussions on how to prioritize the many relevant issues pertaining to peacebuilding. That cannot be done once and for all but would, of course, depend on the specific conditions in the country affected and the situation at hand. The key to priority-setting should be an informed discussion on the prioritizing and sequencing of such issues as good governance, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, human rights, job creation and so on. The Peacebuilding Commission will need to work closely with humanitarian partners, with peacekeeping forces, and with development partners in fleshing out those priorities.

The relationship with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council should be further developed in the time to come. It seems that all three institutions would benefit from more interaction on specific issues. An example would be the Security Council seeking information and specific advice on peacebuilding matters when deciding on mandates for peacekeeping missions.

A specific challenge for the Peacebuilding Commission is to mainstream and increase its outreach activities. The visibility of the Commission is crucial in maintaining its momentum and in creating increased awareness about its work — both locally and globally. To this end, increased use of the Internet and the drawing up of communications strategies specifically to be used in the countries on the agenda, as well as at the global level, would be useful.

We need to work harder to ensure that the Peacebuilding Commission helps to mobilize and marshal sustained and predictable resources for peacebuilding. We need to define how other countries can be declared eligible for support from the Peacebuilding Fund and to ensure that such funds are available — as intended — to fund gaps at the earliest stages of a recovery process. Progress has been made with regards to disbursements, but there is still some way to go in this regard.

However, this should not deter us from continuing our common endeavours to ensure that the necessary resources are available to the Fund in the future. This availability is crucial if the Fund is to be able to provide rapid-release funds and seed money when new countries are added to the Peacebuilding Commission agenda.

At the same time, we must, of course, remain cognizant of the fact that the Peacebuilding Fund will only cover a minor part of the total costs of peacebuilding in all post-conflict situations and that the bulk of funding will have to be provided through other channels. The various funds and programmes and the international financial institutions, including the World Bank and the African Development Bank, are very

important in this regard, and the Peacebuilding Commission could play a useful role in bringing together these actors in discussions about sustainable funding.

The Peacebuilding Commission should be ready to consider new countries for its agenda. When considering countries for its agenda, priority should be given to countries with a particular need for coordinated international action and additional recovery financing. In dealing with new countries, the lessons learned so far should be drawn upon.

Finally, I would like to underline the importance of the standing invitation extended to the European Union, as an institutional donor, to participate in the meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission. We fully support the arrangement finally being implemented allowing for an adequate representation of the European Union (EU), given the major contributions that the EU makes.

The Peacebuilding Commission has a very real chance of becoming a success, not just in its own right, but for the United Nations as a whole. It definitely highlights the important role that the United Nations system can — and should — play in bridging the gap from early recovery to development. The United Nations system has a unique potential in fulfilling this role and, as Member States, we all have an important obligation to support the United Nations in this regard.

Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is very pleased by the publication of the first report of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Secretary-General's report on the Peacebuilding Fund, which has sparked a debate as interesting as it is informative. I see here the eloquent proof of our commitment to make this Commission a core tool in peacebuilding worldwide.

The unique nature of this Commission is that it is representative of the United Nations as it stands today. The Commission is, in fact, composed of members from the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, as well as countries that contribute the most, those which we call the troop-contributing countries. I believe that when our heads of State adopted the Summit Outcome Document in 2005, we not only raised the major issue of how to ensure that there is no gap between the end of the operations run by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in a given country and the post-conflict situation. There is the need to ensure that post-conflict countries do not fall back into those difficulties that we are only too aware of, back into those tragedies that we have had to overcome in some countries. This tool is, therefore, necessary and was created by the General Assembly.

Today, one year later, all the statements made here this morning, beginning with that of the President of the General Assembly, attest to the approval and the positive assessment given to the Peacebuilding Commission and its work. I would like, then, to thank, here and now, all of those who have contributed, especially the members of the Commission, of course. But, I would like especially to note the remarkable work done by our distinguished colleague, Ambassador Ismael Gaspar Martins of Angola, the first Chair of the Commission. I would like to add that other colleagues, our colleagues from El Salvador as well as our colleague from Norway and, of course, our colleague, Frank Majoor, from the Netherlands, greatly contributed to the success that we are all acclaiming today.

The Peacebuilding Commission is, in reality, our subsidiary body; something new that we ourselves created to enable us to respond in a useful, practical and efficient manner to this necessity to reform the United Nations, to respond to the tragedy that plagues many countries, especially in Africa, tragedies that require not only demonstrations of solidarity, such as we hear in the statements made here, but especially concrete actions that could make a difference and provide hope to the peoples involved.

This is what the Commission has done and this is what the Commission is called upon to do. Obviously, it is not yet all perfect. I believe that the report attests to the determination of the Peacebuilding Commission and its members to ensure that that same energy continues, that through our brainstorming and innovative ideas we will be able to meet challenges and provide concrete results.

I would like to sincerely thank the Peacebuilding Support Office that was created to this end and which has been so excellently led by Ms. McAskie, the Assistant Secretary-General. She and her team have shown imagination, creativity and resolve, because it is not easy to convince Member States, particularly when you are offering something new, new ideas. Very frequently, we are somewhat resistant to new ideas. We wonder whether something will be successful, whether

it will make a difference. Well, in a word, yes. I think this team is a winning team and we need to give it the necessary support. We need to ensure that, together, we will be able to work to meet our commitments, collectively assume our responsibilities.

This is what the Peacebuilding Commission is doing. It is not just another structure, just another subsidiary body of the United Nations. It is something that is useful, something that will contribute to bringing peace to peoples who have been in conflict. Furthermore, it is something that will contribute to giving them hope, especially thanks to the financial contributions that will be made.

But let us not be misled. This is not just a matter of financial support. The role of the Commission is to make sure that we can establish a useful dialogue and partnership with the beneficiary countries, so that we can work hand in hand.

There is also the issue of ownership, which is fundamental. But let us be pragmatic. Ownership is a matter of principle, but it must be assumed in a spirit of partnership because any country emerging from conflict is not a position to undertake every task on its own. That country therefore needs the support of the international community through the Peacebuilding Commission, and specifically the Peacebuilding Support Office. I therefore say yes to ownership in principle, but submit that it needs to be intelligently and pragmatically managed so as to ensure that we can draw the optimal benefit not only from all those present in this Hall who are prepared to help and have indicated their willingness to do so, but above all from the willingness of the members of the Peacebuilding Commission and its Support Office.

I may be wrong, but one might imagine that the Commission could do better. We should not, however, be unduly hasty. I think that, considering that the Commission was so recently created and did not even exist a year ago, it is still trying to find itself. It is finding its own way, I believe, and will soon reach its natural cruising speed. The evidence for that is irrefutable. We have all heard here expressions of satisfaction with the Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office.

I should therefore like to hope that we, members and non-members alike, will further mobilize ourselves, as well as the international community, to ensure that the Commission can move forward, build on its achievements, be even more innovative, and make effective contributions to building new, peaceful societies and to achieving national reconciliation in the countries involved.

With respect to the Peacebuilding Fund, one would obviously hope that it will be able to disburse more quickly, but judging from the standard procedures of other United Nations organs and bodies, I believe it would not be mistaken to feel that the Fund is working at an acceptable pace. We need to give it time, too, to learn to manage its affairs transparently, because we require transparent management, and to ensure that available funds are disbursed to good effect. That is the key; more important than the pace of disbursement is knowing where the money will go and to what purpose, and ensuring that it will have an impact in terms of building new societies and peace in the countries involved.

I have every confidence in the Fund's managers and in the Secretary-General, and am very pleased that he has decided to declare Liberia eligible. Who here is not in solidarity with Liberia after all the suffering and hardship it has endured? Who here would not agree to abide by the Secretary-General's decision with respect to a country as devastated as Liberia? I think his is a good decision and must be supported. The best way to support it is to invite not only the traditional donor countries, but all of us — including my country — to make a gesture, howsoever symbolic, of contribution to the Fund. That will make a difference and effect important changes, bolstering our claims to be devoted to peace, justice and freedom, and ensuring that the United Nations ideals are not only practiced but are anchored in a culture of peace established throughout the world. That is what we need to do in supporting the Commission, Ms. McAskie and her team, and the Secretary-General so that the Commission can move forward and continue to innovate and so that the effective results enumerated in the current report can be even more satisfactory in the next.

Mr. Pemagbi (Sierra Leone): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission that are members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Peacebuilding Commission is a baby that has grown fast. That rapid development is the product of

cooperation by members of the Organizational Committee and its first Chairman, Ambassador Gaspar Martins; an able Support Office with excellent leadership; highly dedicated country-specific meeting chairmen for Burundi and Sierra Leone; and the Ambassador of El Salvador, who has led us with considerable insight in our exploration of experiences and best practices in peacebuilding. Of course, without financial support, the Peacebuilding Commission would have been a stunted baby. Sierra Leone thanks all involved. I assure them that their sacrifice will never be in vain.

Sierra Leone is, of course, one of the two specific countries selected for consideration on the agenda of the new mechanism for post-conflict cooperation. Accordingly, we would like to add a few points to this joint debate on the first year of its operation. Our views should help to throw light on any evaluation of the achievements and lessons learned so far. Hopefully, our intervention will also contribute to forthcoming discussions on the way ahead for both the Commission and the Fund.

From the outset, particularly during the series of consultations on the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, Sierra Leone has always been curious to know whether and how it would benefit from the Commission. Today, one year after it came into operation, we can confidently say that Sierra Leone has indeed benefited immensely from that innovative mechanism.

In his maiden address to Parliament last Friday, the new President of Sierra Leone, Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, assured the United Nations that his Government will take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the Peacebuilding Commission. The four priority areas that were identified last year — youth employment and empowerment, justice and security sector reform, good governance and capacity-building — are still valid. They are consistent with the main thrust of the President's policy address to Parliament. For instance, he spoke about a new Sierra Leone where young people will train and work to live productive lives. He also emphasized good governance, civil service reform, justice and the rule of law, and peacebuilding.

In that regard, there should be no doubt whatsoever about the commitment of the new administration in Sierra Leone to the proposed integrated peacebuilding strategy or cooperation framework. The current visit to Sierra Leone by the Chairman of the Sierra Leone country-specific meeting of the Commission, Ambassador Frank Majoor of the Netherlands, is intended to contribute to the process of refining and finalizing the text of the framework for cooperation and partnership between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Peacebuilding Commission.

Meanwhile, we would like to reiterate that national ownership should be the cardinal principle of the cooperation framework. Secondly, due account should be taken of the full scope of the Commission's mandate. In other words, we must not forget that the Commission is also mandated to marshal resources at the disposal of the international community and to help ensure predictable financing, not only for early recovery activities, but also for sustained investment over the medium and long terms.

While we cannot overemphasize the importance of resources through the Peacebuilding Fund, we believe that the new peacebuilding mechanism envisaged by the heads of State and Government in 2005 rests not on one, but on three pillars: the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund. Those three entities must work together and coordinate their activities effectively with other stakeholders, at the country level. Of course, we share the view that the relationship between the Fund and the Commission should be clearly set out, especially to remove the misperception that disbursement of money is the responsibility of the Commission. We note with appreciation the explanation provided in the Secretary-General's report (A/62/138) concerning coordination between the Peacebuilding Fund and other bilateral and multilateral funding mechanisms.

In a country like Sierra Leone, where the line between recovery and development is quite thin, it is not always easy to convince the general public that the Peacebuilding Fund was not designed to reinforce existing national development priorities, but rather was conceived as a flexible mechanism to respond to early or immediate challenges to the peace process.

It is true, as the Secretary-General observes in his report, that the scope of the Peacebuilding Fund as an immediate response mechanism did not fit as neatly in a country like Sierra Leone that has evolved some years beyond the highly fragile immediate post-conflict

environment. However, judging from the positive impact that the Fund has had and is having on the peacebuilding efforts of the country, one can conclude that the Fund has a catalytic role to play at various stages — and I emphasize, "various stages" — of a country's peacebuilding process.

In Sierra Leone, the guns have been silent for over five years. We signed a Peace Agreement in 1999. The country has enjoyed relative peace. Disarmament and demobilization have been completed. The country has been, relatively speaking, at an advanced stage of its peacebuilding process. However, we faced serious challenges that needed immediate attention. We are therefore grateful that the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund responded appropriately. We hope that other countries, especially post-conflict least developed countries at the same or similar stage of the peacebuilding process, may also benefit from the Commission and the Fund.

The report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/62/137) and the Secretary-General's report on the first year of operation of the Peacebuilding Fund (A/62/138) constitute a volume in lessons learned. In other words, we have learned a lot during the past 12 months from the responses of the Commission and the Fund to the situations in Sierra Leone and Burundi.

However, looking ahead to the next phase of the Commission's work, Sierra Leone would like the Commission to have an in-depth policy discussion as soon as possible on the appropriate time for ending its engagement with a country. In other words, how long should Sierra Leone remain on its agenda, taking into account the Commission's mandate to ensure that the country receives the continued attention of the international community?

There are several criteria for measuring the success or effectiveness of this innovative peacebuilding mechanism over the past 12 months. Sierra Leone reiterates that success should be measured on the ground and against the impact that the activities of the Commission and the Fund have had, and will have, on the lives of the people of Sierra Leone, in particular young people, who continue to pose the greatest challenge to the peacebuilding process.

Sierra Leone was a United Nations peacekeeping experiment during its 11-year civil conflict. Today, in its post-conflict phase, Sierra Leone is again a guinea pig for United Nations efforts in supporting the post-conflict recovery process through the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund. We have benefited immeasurably from this role, and I am sure the laboratory results have helped, and are helping, the United Nations to redefine its peacebuilding objectives and strategies. Our plea to the United Nations and to all those that have contributed to taking us to where we are today is to continue to help us to sustain the positive results we have yielded and continue to yield.

We believe the Peacebuilding Fund is a kind of emergency fund meant to close critical gaps in the recovery process of countries emerging from conflict. In other words, it is supposed to support national efforts to prevent relapse into conflict and lay a foundation for development. With this understanding, it is advisable for the Commission to studiously minimize bureaucratic delays in its delivery mechanism.

We look forward with heightened hope and expectation to consolidating the cooperation that has been established between the Peacebuilding Commission and Sierra Leone.

Mrs. Gallardo Hernández (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to congratulate the President on convening this debate on the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/62/137) following its first session. We acknowledge the leadership of the Permanent Representative of Angola as former Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission. We also welcome the Permanent Representative of Japan as new Chairman of the Commission, and we reiterate our best wishes for the success of his term. We would also like to congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Norway and the Netherlands for their work as Chairs of the country-specific configurations on Burundi and Sierra Leone respectively.

A little over a year has elapsed since the Peacebuilding Commission was established in the context of the reform process of the United Nations. The expectations at that time were numerous and wide-ranging. This was reflected in the initial dynamism of the Commission as a new body. It involved consultation among member States and the definition of functions by the Peacebuilding Commission secretariat and the Peacebuilding Fund working group.

We recall that it was also necessary to engage in some measure of strategic planning to ensure that we

were able to carry forward our work in a consistent manner, including the establishment of clear monitoring procedures and action to be taken on the ground. Nonetheless, during this first year, we view the achievements with optimism, although we are well aware of the numerous challenges facing the Commission.

The re-election of El Salvador as a Vice-Chair and its function as coordinator of the Working Group on Lessons Learned demonstrate our commitment to this effort.

Created to fill a gap in the United Nations system and to ease the transition from post-conflict peacekeeping processes to peacebuilding, the Commission, by its composition, adds value to present and future United Nations support to countries that decide to lay down their arms and settle their disputes through dialogue and consultation — all with a view to forging their national development plans.

The presence of donor countries which over recent years have contributed, in the form of economic, technical and financial cooperation, in various countries in a post-conflict situation is paralleled by the presence of countries like El Salvador which have overcome internal violence themselves. We want to contribute through our own experiences in helping to guide the decisions or recommendations that the Peacebuilding Commission may adopt regarding the countries under consideration, namely Sierra Leone and Burundi. Thus, the thing is to incorporate concrete initiatives into a vision shared among the members of the Commission. The first report submitted by the Commission at the end of its first year reflects some progress and achievements, but it also indicates the work that still remains to be done, particularly on the ground.

Indeed, the concrete action of the Commission should really be focused on the ground, because that is where the dividends of peace are really to be felt. In our view, the presence on the ground of members of the Commission through programmed visits is essential in order for the Commission to undertake an analysis and define strategies.

There is the challenge of stepping up coordination with the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, and with the other stakeholders on the ground, who are familiar with the real situation, or with research centres that are working on bolstering peacebuilding endeavours.

El Salvador is of the view that we should also promote the formulation of concrete strategies, as we have done in the cases of Sierra Leone and Burundi, through integrated peacebuilding strategies (IPBS), because that serves to bring added value and to avoid duplicating efforts. The international community expects that the Commission will make a tangible contribution, and why not say so? It should also make some practical recommendations in specific areas or contexts. With that in mind, the Working Group on Lessons Learned, which El Salvador is honoured to lead, has endeavoured to analyse and, through various processes, gather concrete experiences in order to compile a set of lessons learned by the United Nations system working with the international community. When arms are laid down, it becomes necessary to learn a new form of coexistence and join in a shared national development project.

Although each peacebuilding process has its own characteristics, and its success depends, of course, on the political determination of national actors, the implementation of lessons learned must be of benefit to the countries under consideration. We should not forget, therefore, the necessity of creating a historical record that will contribute in the future to helping the United Nations to become more effective in peacebuilding activities.

The modality adopted by the Working Group on Lessons Learned, which uses videoconferences to draw together the actors on the ground and the members of the Commission, reflects the openness and flexibility that must be present in our work.

Indeed, it is an open-ended group, in which all States Members of the United Nations are welcome to participate and make their specific contribution so as to further the quest for lasting solutions on the ground in the countries under consideration.

On the basis of our experience, we feel that, when emerging from an armed conflict, it is essential to bring together a common will to set priorities in the short- and medium-term and to act on the basis of these priorities. We should not forget that, at such times, there are many needs, while national capacity is limited. However, there are some aspects that, if not dealt with promptly, may re-emerge and jeopardize established political agreements among national actors,

including, to mention but a few, opportunities for reinsertion and jobs for former combatants and young people and reform of the security sector. These are subject areas that the Working Group on Lessons Learned has identified and analysed.

From the outset, El Salvador has expressed its firm belief that the Peacebuilding Commission should not be viewed as a body merely for financial cooperation, nor as a mediator between donors and recipient countries. Also, we consider it important for the members of the Commission to be familiar with the areas or programmes to be funded through the Peacebuilding Fund. While it is important to hear the national authorities and their assessment of their own priorities, still the way in which these funds are used on the ground will be more successful if past experiences are also brought to bear.

The reality of our world today shows that no region is exempt from potential conflicts. Therefore, the Peacebuilding Commission should focus its attention on a geographical balance when considering countries. The inclusion of a country or its withdrawal from the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda should be agreed with national authorities. In turn, the incorporation of new countries should take into account the opinion of the members of the Commission.

Lastly, may we thank the secretariat of the Peacebuilding Commission for its support. Within the secretariat there is a geographical balance that enriches the Commission's view with the input of the different regional realities.

Mr. Soler Torrijos (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): May I begin by echoing the thanks of previous speakers for the convening this meeting to consider the report following the first year of work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund. Secondly, my delegation would also like to extend its congratulations to the outgoing Chairman of the Commission, the Permanent Representative of Angola, and welcome the new incoming Chairman, the Permanent Representative of Japan. We would also like to align ourselves with the statement by the delegation of Jamaica on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, which is part of the Peacebuilding Commission.

As members of this new body and witnesses to the progress that it has made, we welcome the outcome of its first year of work. We have seen how the Commission has proved its effectiveness in gathering funding and to focus the attention of the world on the countries on its agenda. We have also seen how it has played an important role as an intergovernmental observer on governance issues in, for example, the elections in Sierra Leone on 11 August. We have also noted its contributions to the coherence of the United Nations system in this regard with the formulation of the integrated peacebuilding strategies (IPBS). We have also witnessed how it contributed to the operational definition of what peacebuilding really means within the United Nations.

In our view, during this second year, the Commission should focus its endeavours on tackling various concrete challenges, inter alia, defining its working methods, for example, defining when the Commission should drop a country from the agenda; ascertaining the possible contributions of civil society to the work of the Commission; maximizing the impact on the ground in developing follow-up mechanisms to assess the peacebuilding strategies in those countries; defining the operational relationship with other pertinent United Nations bodies, regional organizations and subregional bodies; and defining where it can provide added value to the work of other United Nations bodies. In the case of the Security Council, for instance, we feel that the Commission could play an advisory role in cases requiring early warning. Moreover, we also feel it extremely important that the Commission consider including other countries on its agenda. That, too, would help strengthen its role as coordinator of the United Nations and the international community's efforts to build peace.

In that respect, we feel that Guinea-Bissau's request for inclusion in the Commission's agenda, set out in its letter of 11 July, should be considered. We also believe that it would be appropriate for the Commission and other United Nations bodies to study the criteria for placing a country on the Commission's agenda, which could serve as a reference point for the international community. We feel that the Commission's agenda should maintain a regional balance, pursuant to paragraph 12 of the resolution by which it was established.

In conclusion, we believe that the Commission should redouble its efforts at its second session to ensure effective results on the ground and avoid any backsliding that could occur not for a lack of will, but

because of the need for well-defined working methods and criteria.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): We thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing today's debate on the report of the Peacebuilding Commission. South Africa aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We also wish to thank the first Chairperson of the Organizational Committee, Ambassador Gaspar Martins of Angola, and the chairs of the country-specific configurations for a job well done under their leadership.

The Peacebuilding Commission is the result of the collective will of Member States to create support mechanisms for countries recovering from the devastation of conflicts. The work of the Commission and its dynamic approach are crucial if we are to succeed in our efforts to prevent countries emerging from conflict from relapsing back into conflict. Certainly, those of us in the African continent viewed the establishment of the Commission as an important step in assisting and providing the necessary support to our sister countries in their post-conflict peacebuilding, reconciliation and development endeavours.

The first annual report of the Peacebuilding Commission before us provides a detailed account of the activities of the Commission during the past 12 months. It reflects the collective role played by various members of the Commission and national Governments, and the invaluable contribution made by other stakeholders, such as civil society and the international financial institutions.

South Africa notes with satisfaction the Commission's efforts to provide medium- and long-term peace consolidation advice to countries emerging from conflict situations, as well as funding from the Peacebuilding Fund for peace consolidation projects. With the cases of Sierra Leone and Burundi being examined by the Peacebuilding Commission in their country-specific configurations, the Commission has produced good results indeed.

In its first year under the excellent leadership of Angola, the Commission was able to operate within a flexible framework in developing working relationships with all its partners. In that context, the Commission has adopted provisional rules of procedure, provisional guidelines on the participation of civil society, and country-specific formats to consider the cases of Burundi and Sierra Leone, while processes to develop integrated peacebuilding strategies have been launched.

It is important that the Peacebuilding Commission continue to be driven by Member States. In that context, the Organizational Committee must continue to be the focal point of all the Commission's activities, and its central role must be strengthened. While it is crucial to refine those relationships and the criteria for identifying new areas of work, there is a sense of urgency for the Commission to go beyond procedural concerns to perform its activities fully on the ground.

We believe that, in the year ahead under the able leadership of Japan, the Commission will need to work towards more practical and concrete outcomes from its efforts to promote peace consolidation. The success of the Commission will be judged by its ability to make a real difference to the lives of people in Freetown, Bujumbura and beyond. We believe that the ultimate success of the Commission's work lies in the transformation of all its plans and policies into concrete actions. The main challenge facing it is to maximize its impact on the ground in full alignment, cooperation and accordance with the national Governments' policies and strategies.

South Africa believes that peacebuilding should be based on the principles of national ownership and international partnership. Quick-impact projects and the sufficient injection of predictable resources in a country emerging from conflict are crucial to ensuring stability and development on the ground. For that reason, the invaluable support provided by the donor community to the activities of the Peacebuilding Commission needs to be consolidated and enhanced if we are to succeed in achieving peace, security and development, in particular in the early post-conflict stages.

On the issue of national ownership, we should make sure that the countries emerging from conflict have full ownership of peacebuilding for the benefit of all their people. In that regard, we believe that the concerned countries must be allowed genuine national ownership in identifying priorities for peacebuilding. In addition, while there is no argument that the Peacebuilding Commission has an advisory role, it

should be prepared to listen to the priorities, needs and views of the countries under consideration. After all, the primary clients of the Commission are the countries emerging from conflict.

The Peacebuilding Fund was created for the specific purpose of assisting in the facilitation of peacebuilding activities. In that context, the Fund was understood to be a catalyst for attracting much-needed official development assistance and resources, particularly at a time when there may be little hope of success towards recovery. It is for that reason that we hope that there will be clarity about the role of the Peacebuilding Fund.

Finally, we concur with the view that the Peacebuilding Commission needs to further strengthen its relationship with relevant organs and institutions, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, and regional and subregional organizations. In our continent, the African Union continues to play its role in the peacebuilding field, including through the adoption of a post-conflict reconstruction and development policy. In that regard, we hope that, in the year ahead, the Commission will strengthen its cooperation with relevant bodies on the African continent. Actors such as the African Union, the regional economic communities and other agencies, such as the African Development Bank, have a key role to play in all peacebuilding efforts for countries emerging from conflict.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): My delegation wishes to commend Ambassador Gaspar Martins of Angola and his dedicated team, ably supported by the Peacebuilding Support Office led by Assistant Secretary-General Carolyn McAskie, for their contribution and pioneering role in making the Peacebuilding Commission a reality today. We also congratulate Ambassador Takasu of Japan on his election as the new Chairman of the Organizational Committee of the Commission, and wish to assure him of the continued support of Ghana, as a member and Vice-Chair, in addressing the remaining challenges facing the Commission, some of which have been highlighted in its first annual report.

My delegation would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for submitting the first annual report on the Peacebuilding Fund and to commend his efforts in the area of peacebuilding.

We recall that the hybrid creation of the Peacebuilding Commission as an intergovernmental advisory body by concurrent resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council on 20 December 2005 makes it a unique institutional mechanism and the first of its kind in the United Nations. The Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, which is intended to be separate and independent of the Commission, together constitute two key pillars of the peacebuilding architecture within the United Nations system.

Our debate should not lose sight of the ultimate purpose for which the Peacebuilding Commission was created, which is to mobilize international resources and coordinate the efforts of relevant actors both inside and outside the United Nations family in order to prevent the recurring cycle of violence in countries emerging from conflict, through the adoption of post-conflict peacebuilding strategies to ensure sustainable peace, recovery and development. That entails helping the national or transitional Governments of war-torn or fragile States to rebuild institutions of democratic governance and accountability, to pursue security sector reform and reconciliation and to promote a culture of respect for the rule of law and human rights.

At the same time, the Peacebuilding Commission is supposed to play an advocacy and catalytic role in galvanizing the international community to pay sustained attention to these countries in the medium to long term, until national authorities have developed the capacity to carry out peacebuilding processes on their own long after the external helpers have left.

The various configurations of the meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission provide a rare opportunity for United Nations bodies to interface with the Bretton Woods institutions and other donors, with a view to preventing duplication of peacebuilding efforts. The Commission further provides a forum for the participation of civil society groups or non-governmental organizations, through whose grass-roots activism the prospects for the success of peacebuilding initiatives at the local or community level are enhanced.

The first annual report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/62/137) highlights some of the achievements of the Commission in its first year of existence. Notwithstanding formidable difficulties encountered, members succeeded in putting in place the structures necessary for that novel institution to take off, albeit imperfectly. Given its relatively short

lifespan, the Peacebuilding Commission remains, in many respects, a work in progress. As highlighted in the first annual report of the Commission, there remain many challenges ahead. One year after it was created, a clear consensus on aspects of the Commission's mandate, operational methods and relationship with other United Nations bodies and non-United Nations entities has yet to emerge.

The Peacebuilding Commission must be adequately resourced to strengthen its capacity to accept more countries on its agenda. That will also require further improvements in its working methods, taking into account lessons learned in its first year of operation. Thus, those who qualify to be on the Commission's agenda should be determined not by numbers, geography or region, but by necessity, relevance and reality.

Credible reports received from the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau, the Economic and Social Council, the Economic Community of West African States and the International Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau, among other sources, confirm that the situation in Guinea-Bissau remains fragile. Ghana therefore supports Guinea-Bissau's pending request to the Security Council to be referred to the Peacebuilding Commission. We look forward to working together with other members of the Security Council to achieve the necessary consensus on Guinea-Bissau's request.

The Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, as well as all relevant actors, must make greater efforts to mobilize the support of regional organizations. In the case of Africa, the African Union Policy Framework on Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development, which places emphasis on preventive diplomacy through addressing the root causes of conflict — such as poverty, injustice and inequality and the absence of the rule of law and good governance — should be regarded as an important instrument for cooperation among the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund and African countries to devise post-conflict peacebuilding strategies. Further clarification is desirable as to what the relationship should be between the Commission and the Fund and between them and other United Nations bodies, such as the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

In conclusion, it is the hope and the expectation of my delegation that the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund will succeed in mobilizing more resources — financial, technical and otherwise — as well as in attracting the political will necessary to facilitate their work to add value to peacebuilding efforts in countries in post-conflict situations, including Burundi and Sierra Leone.

Mr. Steeghs (Netherlands): The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Portugal.

The Peacebuilding Commission was the missing piece in the United Nations jigsaw puzzle. It was intended to bridge the gap between immediate post-conflict efforts and long-term recovery and development. Bridging that gap is crucial to improving the lot of the poorest on the planet — the bottom billion, as Paul Collier calls them in his recent book by the same title. Nearly three quarters of the people in the bottom billion have recently been through — or are still in the midst of — civil war. And half of all civil wars result from post-conflict relapse.

Breaking the cycle of conflict so that the bottom billion can break free from the prison of poverty is what the Peacebuilding Commission can contribute to. That is a lot to live up to, but over the past year the Peacebuilding Commission has clearly been building momentum by building strategies and identifying priorities for Burundi and Sierra Leone. The reports before us today during this useful and valuable General Assembly debate (A/62/137 and A/62/138) lead us to that conclusion.

As a staunch supporter of both international order and international development, the Netherlands is proud to have played its role in getting this centrepiece of United Nations reform off the ground, and we are proud to continue to support it. As we speak, my Ambassador, Frank Majoor, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's Sierra Leone configuration, is on his second mission to that country. After the peaceful, orderly and genuinely contested elections there, he seeks to expand the partnership between Sierra Leone and the international community, in particular the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mutual accountability must be at the heart of that partnership — in fact, of any partnership that the Peacebuilding Commission fosters. That is why we believe it is so important that, in the short term, a

monitoring and evaluation framework be integrated into the integrated peacebuilding strategy for Burundi and, in the long term, into the strategy for Sierra Leone. I am referring to monitoring not in terms of time-consuming number crunching, but in general terms, with a focus on potential peacebuilding gaps.

At this point in time, we can safely state that the Peacebuilding Commission has gotten off the ground. Ultimately, the Commission will have to be judged according to results in countries in the field, not in New York. For such results to materialize, the Commission must work to realize its potential as a catalyst for in-country coordination. With the successful country-specific meetings, we have already been laying the groundwork for just that. The Commission should not be an extra layer; it should not add to the burden of bureaucracy facing already-strained States. Rather, it should add value by standing at the operational and analytical centre of collective efforts to build peace — real peace, which is more than the absence of war.

For that, we also need the enhanced support of the Peacebuilding Support Office. And clearly, the Commission cannot do without the support of all the other international and national actors involved. Together we can build that bridge — the bridge between immediate post-conflict efforts and long-term recovery and development. This enterprise will now enter its second year, and we agree with the Commission's priorities for the forthcoming 12 months, especially the following ones: devising exit strategies, coming up with modalities for civil society involvement and working out the details of a monitoring mechanism for the integrated peacebuilding strategies. Beyond that, we feel that the Commission should also give more attention to quick wins, which are crucial to winning the peace.

I started by saying that the Peacebuilding Commission was the missing piece of a jigsaw puzzle. After only one year, it would be unrealistic to think that the new piece would in all respects fit entirely. And it does not fit entirely. There is still ample room for improvement. But there is that good feeling — a gut feeling, I might say — that in the near future everything might just fall right into place if only we work hard enough. And the Netherlands will.

Mr. Ntakirutimana (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish on behalf of my delegation to thank the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session for having convened this important meeting on the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/62/137) and of the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/62/138). My delegation would also like to commend the work of the Organizational Committee under the chairmanship of Angola and the vice-chairmanship of El Salvador, and warmly to welcome Japan as the new Chair of the Committee.

In addition, my delegation offers deserved thanks to His Excellency Mr. Johan Løvald, Permanent Representative of Norway, for the leadership that he repeatedly demonstrated both during the country-specific meetings on Burundi and during meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission. I also wish to sincerely thank Ms. Carolyn McAskie and her team for their considerable support to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission.

My delegation fully endorses the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), but would like to make several additional comments.

Since the establishment of democratically elected institutions, Burundi has made considerable progress in terms of peacebuilding, in particular with the signing in September 2006 of a comprehensive ceasefire agreement with the last rebel movement, the PALIPEHUTU-Forces nationales de libération (FNL). In that regard, my delegation duly appreciates the efforts of the South African facilitation and welcomes the regional peace initiative as well as the support provided to my country by the United Nations, the African Union and the international community in general.

In selecting Burundi as the first country to benefit from the Peacebuilding Fund, the members of the Commission demonstrated their commitment to Burundi in its search for strategies and methods to enable it to build sustainable peace and to revive a national economy that can generate sustainable and beneficial development.

The Government of Burundi appreciates the efforts undertaken by the Commission and welcomes its first report. First and foremost, it raised the international community's awareness of the urgent need for community recovery in Burundi by participating in the development partners round table

that took place on 24 and 25 May. We are particularly pleased that the round table was successful. My delegation counts on the Commission to ensure that partners and donors meet their commitments.

Secondly, the Commission held several country-specific meetings on Burundi here in New York, which provided an opportunity to think about the concept of good political and administrative governance in Burundi. Similar work was done to identify the key priorities for peacebuilding and for reducing the risk of a relapse into conflict and, of direct interest to us, to define and adopt the strategic peacebuilding framework.

Today the Burundi Government, working with all stakeholders nationally and with the support of the Commission, is exploring the establishment of a follow-up mechanism. Work is moving ahead properly in that area.

As the two reports before us today demonstrate, 2006 saw the inception and operational launching of the Commission and of the Peacebuilding Support Office, under the committed leadership of Ms. Carolyn McAskie. This preliminary work was essential for its first year of experience in the process of peacebuilding in post-conflict countries. While welcoming the work already done, we must underscore that much remains to be done, in particular with respect to the implementation of the strategic framework and the follow-up mechanism.

My delegation continues to believe that the Peacebuilding Commission will carry out its mission successfully as it supports my country in its efforts to build lasting peace. With the Commission, a glimmer of hope has been born in the hearts of Burundians. And with the Commission, calm and assurance will be the hallmark of the implementation of our programmes.

As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission and as a beneficiary country, my delegation would like to make a few comments about the future activities of the Peacebuilding Commission. First, the principle of national ownership must always be the cornerstone of the Commission's activities. Secondly, the Commission should differentiate itself from other United Nations subsidiary bodies by adopting innovative measures with regard to transparency, compromise, consensus-building and flexibility. Thirdly, the Commission should continue to work closely with the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the international financial institutions.

I wish to conclude my statement by reiterating once again Burundi's commitment to success and thus to becoming a source of pride for the Peacebuilding Commission and for the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): At the very outset, my delegation wishes to express appreciation to Ambassador Ismael Gaspar Martins, Permanent Representative of Angola, for his able chairmanship during the inaugural year of the Peacebuilding Commission. I wish also to express best wishes to Ambassador Yukio Takasu, Permanent Representative of Japan, as he assumes the chairmanship of the Commission.

My delegation believes that the best guarantee against conflict is the individual and collective enjoyment of durable peace. To achieve that in a post-conflict country, it is necessary to recognize the special needs of that country so that it can be assisted accordingly in laying the foundations of sustainable peace.

The Holy See therefore warmly welcomed the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission as a response to the need for greater coherence and coordination of international peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict situations. The Commission's success will be measured on the ground, based on whether or not it makes a difference to communities and countries with which it works. Expectations of what it can deliver in countries emerging from armed conflicts continue to climb. This is especially true in Burundi and Sierra Leone. There, the Peacebuilding Commission is entering uncharted areas of action, but the Commission's emphasis on strong national ownership and responsibility gives us reason to hope for success in those first two focus countries, as well as in other post-conflict States that will be considered in the future.

The Peacebuilding Commission debates and documents suggest that one of the main challenges facing it is to prove that it is not a superfluous superstructure cast over the various stakeholders and actors already working on the ground. Rather, it is

meant to bring added value to the overall effort of helping post-conflict States and societies successfully manage the difficult transition from war to sustainable peace and development. The task is made even more daunting by the fact that post-conflict situations pose multiple and particularly complex problems, all competing for immediate attention. To enable the Peacebuilding Commission to respond adequately to this, the international community is equally challenged to equip it with the necessary mandate and resources.

I wish to commend the Working Group on Lessons Learned for its efforts in accumulating best practices and lessons on critical peacebuilding issues, thus helping the Peacebuilding Commission make decisions more swiftly while avoiding the repetition of past mistakes.

The Holy See was pleased with the approval of guidelines for civil society participation in the Peacebuilding Commission. Such participation would be decisive on the ground where, among other stakeholders, faith-based organizations are fully engaged in human development and are at the forefront in fostering dialogue, in peacemaking and in post-conflict reconciliation.

My delegation is aware of the continuing debates on what the Peacebuilding Commission should be, on its relation to peacekeeping operations and on its procedures and methods. While this is part of the Commission's growth process, these debates should not distract or derail it from its mandate of making a difference in the lives of peoples and countries, lest it become just another forum for debate.

My delegation is pleased to assure the Assembly of its continuing interest in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and to encourage the Commission in the pursuit of its challenging task of helping rebuild individual lives and entire countries ravaged by war. It will have fully achieved this task when development, peace and security and human rights are finally interlinked and mutually reinforcing in countries which have known the devastation of armed conflict.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, I now give the floor to the observer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mr. Motter (Inter-Parliamentary Union): I am pleased to have been given this opportunity to address the General Assembly on agenda item 10 as it relates to the first annual report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/62/137). As we all know, peace will never be fully achieved without good governance, and parliaments, which are among the institutions at the heart of governance, play a key role in the peacebuilding process.

During the Peacebuilding Commission's first year of operations, the country-specific meetings on Burundi identified a number of critical priorities for peace consolidation and for reducing the country's risk of relapsing into conflict. We are pleased to see that action to improve governance and democracy was at the core of those priorities. The Peacebuilding Commission report recommends, among other things, promoting the capacity of the parliament to enact and revise national legislation and to ensure its compliance with international human rights standards.

We have striven to support the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission in Burundi and in Sierra Leone. In Burundi, we have worked with the parliament to build its lawmaking and oversight capacities. With United Nations Democracy Fund support, we have begun implementing activities aimed at enhancing the capacities of women parliamentarians, including initiatives aimed at bringing women parliamentarians from all political parties together to work for the promotion of women's rights.

Above all, we have engaged the leadership of the parliament in an initiative to promote dialogue in a bid to ensure that decision-making is as inclusive as possible. Indeed, we cannot overemphasize the importance of parliament as the crucible of national reconciliation in its role of mediating between the divergent interests of society, especially against the immediate post-conflict background of Burundi.

What I have just said regarding Burundi holds true for Sierra Leone. We are anxious to ensure that its parliament figures high on the peacebuilding agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission and the international community at large. We owe it to the people of Sierra Leone to ensure that the fragile peace process does not come unravelled. We should ensure that the representatives of the people rise above parochial interests in favour of the general interest. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), as the world

organization of national parliaments, stands ready to continue to support efforts to develop parliaments that are representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective.

In the light of that, the IPU is sending a mission to Sierra Leone to review the functioning of its parliament and assist parliamentary authorities in identifying specific needs with a view to developing a comprehensive project of assistance to strengthen the capacity of the parliament to perform its lawmaking, oversight and representational roles more efficiently. We are doing this, I am pleased to add, in cooperation with the United Nations.

It is our fervent hope that the Peacebuilding Commission will extend its hand to other post-conflict countries. In that regard, we are pleased with the recent decision to include Liberia among countries eligible for support under the Peacebuilding Fund.

During the Peacebuilding Commission's first year of work, the Commission has covered many areas aimed at bringing more coherence to peacebuilding efforts where democratically elected parliaments have been placed high among the priorities of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with resolution 3369 (XXX) of 10 October 1975, I now give the floor to the observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Wahab (Organization of the Islamic Conference): My delegation would like to express sincere appreciation for the excellent beginning that has been made by the Peacebuilding Commission under the leadership of Ambassador Gaspar Martins and his team. We welcome Ambassador Takasu as the new Chairman of the Commission and assure him and his team of our full support and cooperation. We also congratulate the Peacebuilding Support Office, headed by Assistant Secretary-General McAskie, for its excellent work doing the first year of the Commission's work.

We welcome the report of the Peacebuilding Commission, contained in document A/62/137. Indeed, it gives my delegation great pleasure to see this first-ever annual report, which is objective, informative and coherent in its content and timely in its need. My delegation concurs with the report's assertion that the main challenge now facing the Commission is to maximize its impact on the ground to make the United Nations peacebuilding architecture an effective instrument of international collaboration in support of countries emerging from conflict.

We also welcome the Secretary-General's report on the Peacebuilding Fund, contained in document A/62/138. While it appears that contributions to the Fund are gradually flowing in, we feel that greater effort needs to be exerted in order for Fund initiatives to realize their maximum desired effect.

The OIC continues to remain engaged in major initiatives directed at Sierra Leone. The latest meeting of the OIC Contact Group on Sierra Leone was held two weeks ago here at the United Nations. The resulting deliberations and decisions taken ensure that the OIC will remain committed to all pertinent initiatives targeting that country.

In terms of broader engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission, the determination of the OIC to remain committed to its endeavours is reflected in the final communiqué of the annual coordination meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs of the States members of the OIC, which was held here in New York on 2 October 2007.

The ministers of the OIC countries unequivocally appreciated the Peacebuilding Commission's important contributions during its first year, as well as the active and constructive participation of the OIC member States that are members of the Commission. They welcomed the invitation to the OIC to participate in the Commission's meetings and supported its continued engagement in that regard. Finally, they requested OIC member States to consider providing financial contributions to the OIC Secretary-General such that they may be transferred as the OIC's contribution to the Peacebuilding Fund.

Lastly, we wish the Peacebuilding Commission the very best as it continues in its endeavour to achieve its noble objectives.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 10 and 110.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.